

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee.

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Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair and members of the committee: my name is Rose Datum. I live in Old Lyme, I am a senior at Lyme-Old Lyme High School, and I work at the Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library. I'm here today to speak out in support of continuing to fund Connecticut's libraries, and specifically in support of the borrowitCT program (formerly known as Connecticard) and the deliveritCT program. These programs help children's education, and cutting them will diminish the success and growth of Connecticut's youth.

I remember my mom taking me with her to Groton Public Library, where she worked, when I was a little kid. She would tuck my library card into her wallet before we left, so I could check out my own books. Groton's library is much bigger than Old Lyme's library, so I was amazed at the number of books they had there. I wanted to read all of them. My mom explained to me that even though my library card was from Old Lyme, I could still check out books from Groton thanks to the Connecticard program. I wandered among the stacks in the children's section each week, bringing books like *Harry Potter* and *The Wizard of Oz* home with me to read. And if I wanted a book that neither Old Lyme nor Groton had, all I had to do was request it, with my mom's help, and it would come in from another library.

Without borrowitCT and Connecticard, my childhood would have been much more limited. I would have had only the contents of my small hometown library, instead of every single library in Connecticut. If my library didn't have a book I needed for an essay or a project for school, I would have been out of luck. These programs that connect libraries connect me to a huge network of resources that allowed me to grow up with only my imagination as the limit to what I could learn. Cutting the funding for these programs now would deprive the next generation of children of the same opportunity to learn and grow.

Now that I'm older, I work at my hometown library, the Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library. It may be small, but it's a community center where people come to learn, work, and, of course, read. I serve many patrons each day, and I'm so glad that each of them chooses to come to the library. My favorite patrons, though, are always the kids. I get to see them enjoying the same books I read when I was younger. I remember one young boy who had just gotten his library card and was checking out books for the first time. I explained to him how he could use his new card at any library in Connecticut to check out any book. That small piece of paper had just unlocked an incredible amount of information for that boy.

Libraries make a difference in kids' lives. And having access to not just one library, but every library in Connecticut? That's incredible. Right now, every child in Connecticut has that opportunity. Every child in Connecticut has access to resources far beyond what any one library could provide, resources that allow children to learn and enhance their education. Libraries shaped my childhood, and they will continue to shape the next generation of children. We must give these children the best resources and the best chance to learn. Thank you.